

VZCZCXRO7428
PP RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHNJ #1255/01 2961431
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 231431Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4488
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 001255

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE, SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [CD](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: CHADIAN REBELS AND INTER-ETHNIC CLASHES IN GOZ BEIDA AREA

11. (SBU) Summary: On October 22, Chadian rebels occupied the Chadian town of Goz Beida (southeastern Chad) for less than 24 hours. Able to take the town without a fight (local authorities had left the day before), the rebels reportedly departed northward. Rebels did not threaten humanitarian workers, and support for refugee camps in the area continues as before. Goz Beida is in a region of escalating ethnic animosity along the Chad/Sudan border with a resulting increase in IDP flows westward. In the complicated mosaic of ethnicities in this part of Chad, it appears that that a Government of Chad/Dadjo alliance is coalescing against a Chadian rebel/janjaweed/Sudanese Government of National Unity (GNU) alliance. End Summary.

12. (SBU) UNHCR Country Director Serge Male notified the Embassy that Chadian rebels (reportedly a fusion of the Democratic Revolutionary Council of Acheikh Ibn Oumar, Mahamat Nouri's Union of Forces for Progress and Democracy, and the Tama-led FUC) had taken the town of Goz Beida without any resistance at about 3 p.m. on October 22. The rebel group calls itself the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (French acronym UFDD). Local authorities had departed the area the previous day. The rebels visited the UN compound, assured humanitarian workers that they meant them no harm, and patrolled the town. Later that day, some 30 of their number departed Goz Beida northward in the direction of Ade (where the GOC has heavily fortified positions, including attack helicopters). Overall the rebels were reported to have some 50 - 60 vehicles. UNHCR reported that by October 23 all rebels had departed Goz Beida without incident; meanwhile, a rebel spokesman on Radio France International claimed that rebel forces continued to control Goz Beida and Ade. (Comment: Inasmuch as Chadian authorities have not returned to Goz Beida, it is not clear who, if anybody, is in control. End comment.) The UN reports that it has been able to move about without difficulty, and the humanitarian workers are providing the usual level of support for refugees in surrounding refugee camps.

13. (SBU) PolOff traveled extensively in the region prior to the October 22 incursion, and was informed that from October 13-14, heavily armed janjaweed (widely believed to be actively supported by the GNU) attacked Chadian Dadjo populations and IDPs in the Goz Beida area. Refugees in the neighboring camp of Djabal reported dramatic versions of the conflict to PolOff. One Refugee Committee leader described aggressive janjaweed activity in the vicinity of For Baranga, where three men were abducted from the village, loaded into a truck and killed on the road. He warned of the union between the janjaweed and Chadian Arabs, who were receiving Sudanese assistance in the GNU's bid to oust President Deby. The Refugee Committee Leader acknowledged to PolOff that refugees in Djabal looked

to SLA rebels for "protection" and were only too eager to leave the camp to help in the fight against the janjaweed. In the IDP camp of Gouroukoun, the Chef des Chefs told PolOff that President Bashir and the GNU were the root of all problems in the Goz Beida area and the sources behind the janjaweed atrocities that had driven almost 3,000 new IDPs to locations near the Goz Amir refugee camp since early October. According to the Secretary-General of Goz Beida, President Bashir, in an attempt to "Balkanize" the sub-region, is using the janjaweed and scorched-earth techniques to destabilize the black African villages in Chad, beginning in the east and moving inland.

¶4. (SBU) UNICEF representatives in the area described the emergence in the southern border region of an "Arab alliance," comprised not only of janjaweed elements but also of Chadian rebels and even non-Arab members of certain local tribes (according to the Chef des Chefs in the Gouroukoun IDP camp, these tribes include the Ouddai, the Noimbi, the Taqo, the Maharia, the Shigerat, the Nabak, the Maseria Rouge and the Mimi). Some of these groups reportedly received written invitations to join this alliance.

¶5. (SBU) UNHCR Goz Beida representatives told Poloff October 16 that in response to the emerging "Arab alliance," there is an inchoate "black alliance" forming among those groups who declined the invitation to join the Arab alliance and who believe it is necessary to defend non-Arab interests in the region against Darfur-style persecution. On one side are the "Arabs": janjaweed, Chadian rebels, the Ouddai and the Mimi; and on the other are the "blacks": the Dadjo, the

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Masalit, the Mobi and the Singar. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Goz Beida rep did not dismiss this theory out of hand but did note that the phenomenon of proxy warfare may also be at work. ICRC rep also observed that Chadian forces were now openly admitting that they were fighting in the south to protect villagers (i.e. Dadjo) from persecution, something they had not done in previous months during similar instability.

Comment

¶6. (SBU) The sequence of events is reminiscent of the start of the April 13 attacks on N'djamena, which also commenced in Goz Beida. While an advance on N'djamena is unlikely to play out in a similar manner this time, the outbreak of fighting in Eastern Chad will lead to wider insecurity with unpredictable results.